

Youth bowls for USA in Holland



*Damien
Moody*

Damien Moody, the son of Nancy West, has been selected by the People to People Sports Ambassadors Program to represent the United States in Holland, EU on a bowling tournament from July 21–August 1, 2006. His Bowling Coach noticed Damien, 15, last summer while playing on a junior league at the St. Paul Lanes in Aurora. Damien's Coach was so impressed with his ability that he nominated him to the Sports Ambassadors Program through People to People.

Damien's adoptive mother, Nancy West, shared that the nomination process taught her a lot about how impressive her son's abilities are. He was competing with kids from all over the Chicagoland area, and he also went through a rigorous interview process prior to being accepted.

Not only will Damien be able to travel and compete abroad, but there is also an educational element. Youth can earn college credit for the experience. To learn more about the Sports Ambassadors Program visit www.sportsambassadors.org.

Moore family faithfully fosters teens

"If you want to sell a house – bake cookies!" This quote could be a motto for foster parent Tina Moore, thanks to her affinity for baking cookies. Caseworkers and community service workers who have visited the Moore home would also agree the cookies can set a mood. More important than the welcoming aroma, she and her husband Ron have filled their home with adopted and foster children.

The Moores have been foster parents for more than four years. According to Tina, "as with most things we imagine for ourselves, we sometimes find that God has something else in mind," speaking to how her life and family has changed and grown unexpectedly over the last few years.

Tina is a stay-at-home mother, providing love, educational support and nurturing 24 hours a day. She is also a trained interpreter for the hearing impaired and stays involved in her parish. In addition, she is an active member and Chair of the DeKalb Foster Adoptive Parent Alliance (F.A.P.A.). Ron, a humble source of great strength and support to Tina and the children, is a "behind the scenes" foster dad, who is also

actively involved with their parish.

The Moores are living examples of their faith and family values, particularly when fostering teens. When presented a new challenge to care for a teen, with a child of her own, Tina said there was a very simple solution, "We parented her, and she in turn parented her child." The Moores went on to maintain a relationship with this young mother, who is now successfully living independently with her own child.

Tina also believes it is important to maintain a relationship with the birth parents and families of her adopted and foster children. Their family is open to sharing their lives when the situation presents itself and it is mutually agreeable. They also feel it is important to share their lives with other fostering families. Tina especially shared that she would like to encourage other foster and adoptive parents to attend the DeKalb F.A.P.A., or similar associations in their areas. She feels there is so much to learn from other family's experiences that could provide ideas and a support system to advocate for foster and adoptive families.

Region's trailblazer passes on



Gloria Morales

On January 28, 2006 Gloria Morales left this world, but before doing so she left behind a legacy that reaches through generations in the Aurora community where she lived and worked. Being the first licensed Hispanic foster mother in the Northern Region, Gloria Morales paved the way for future Hispanic and Spanish-speaking foster families in the area. Embracing her Puerto Rican heritage, Gloria along with her husband, Toribio, encouraged the Hispanic community to do the same by becoming involved in local Hispanic groups and events.

However, Gloria was first and foremost a mother. She was a mother to her two children by birth, three by adoption and about 200 children placed in her care over the span of 25 years as a DCFS foster parent.

Gloria's life was celebrated by generations of foster kids, some who are now adults, and who brought their own children to pay respects to a woman who had once opened her home to them. Even the parents of some of the children she fostered over the years came with their children to also celebrate the life of a woman who answered a call to motherhood, no matter why, or who needed it.

Regional Administrator thanks caregivers

As in nature, one thing is certain and that is change, most obviously witnessed in the passing of seasons. Yet sometimes, in the midst of the most obvious changes, we sometimes overlook the constants. Those are things you come to rely upon, but sometimes take for granted. The past year with the monumental changes brought about by the recent internal reorganization, may have drawn some of the attention away from the constants—most notably our foster and adoptive parents.

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know that in the midst of change we have not lost sight of your contributions to our shared commitment of child welfare. You are, and will always be the most valued and relied upon resource this Department has. It is from the human element that the Department was born, and it is the human element that continues to maintain it. Without your steadfast dedication and tireless efforts to contribute to the needs of our children, our basic structure would crumble. Foster care is the foundation of what supports our purpose, the well being of children.

Foster parenting is a noble and selfless act that transcends seemingly impossible boundaries. I am awed by all of you who take on this monumental task. I thank you all personally. On behalf of the entire Northern Region, we thank you for your contribution to not only child welfare, but your

investment in the future of our communities, and ultimately the world we live in. As we celebrate Foster Parent Appreciation Month in Illinois, please know that you are the constant that is relied on, and never taken for granted.

Debbie Palmer-Thomas
Regional Administrator

AFT Scholarship open

Adoptive Families Today (AFT), a volunteer adoptive parent group, is accepting candidates for two \$1785.00 educational scholarships. To qualify for a scholarship, applicants must:

- live in foster care in one of the following Illinois counties: Cook, Lake, Kane, McHenry or DuPage
- be a graduating high school senior or GED recipient
- maintain a grade point average of 2.0 or above
- demonstrate leadership in one or more of these areas: academics, student government, athletics, high school organizations and clubs, community service, and employment.

The application deadline is July 15, 2006. To request an application and scholarship guidelines, applicants should write to: The Scholarship Committee, Adoptive Families Today, P.O. Box 1726, Barrington, IL 60011-1726, or call 847-382-0858, or email adopadvo@aol.com.

Caregiver Institutes offer help to navigate transitions

The 2006 Caregivers Institutes' nine-stop statewide tour came to the Northern Region on March 25 in Rockford and April 29 in Aurora. The DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development's Office of Foster Parent Support Services, along with the divisions of Service Intervention and Operations, rallied a full slate of experts for a dynamic presentation on ways caregivers can help young people make effective transitions within and out of the child welfare system.

"These Institutes are our way to say thanks to caregivers by sharing information to help them as they help our young people," said Deputy Director Velma Williams.

The Saturday session started with several youth in care describing how the adults in their lives contributed to them moving successfully toward adulthood.



Amber Heffner and Jeremy Harvey opened the Caregivers Institute by sharing how adults helped prepare them for life after the foster care system.

Likewise, caregivers also heard the adult perspective on how to enhance that relationship. Personal testimonies led into Regional Administrator Debbie Palmer-Thomas' opening remarks describing the Department's strategic direction and how caregivers will be involved.

The Integrated Assessment and the CAYIT program are two initiatives that call for caregivers to be better informed when cases are opened and more involved during the life of the case. Representatives from the Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council also encouraged participants to use the local councils as a way to problem-solve and raise their voices.

The second portion of the training provided practical tips on how to move youth successfully toward self-sufficiency. The first important step is education. The Local Area Network Liaisons provided details on community programs to support students at-risk of suspension, expulsion, and truancy. The group also learned about resources from the DCFS Education Advocates to help caregivers work with schools more effectively. Since the home can also be like a classroom, caregivers were coached on how to find "teachable moments" to shore up life lessons on finances, employment and practical matters.



Debbie Palmer-Thomas, Regional Administrator, explains new DCFS policies to caregivers at the Rockford session.

Young people prepared with a foundation of education and life skills will be ready to move on to college or employment. Staff from the Office of Education and Transition shared with caregivers many services and programs for both options. Perhaps spurred by the thought of youth embarking on successful, self-sufficient lives, the caregivers left the training informed and energized.

"My wife drags me to these trainings and I usually hate them. This one was fun and I learned a lot. I am coming back next year," said one foster father (who asked to remain anonymous).

The Office of Foster Parent Support Services is taking that feedback and evaluations from the series of institutes to make plans for 2007. For more information or to receive materials, contact the office at 217-524-2422.

Northern Region Training Calendar

Integrated Assessment Training

College of DuPage Area
630-942-2903

ELGIN
June 8 (Thu)

Judson College
7-9 p.m.

ROCKFORD
June 3 (Sat)

RVC Stenstrom Center
9:30-11:30 a.m.

WAUKEGAN
June 1 (Thu)

Ramada Inn
7-9 p.m.

Rock Valley Area
815-921-2010

Educational Advocacy

Two 3-hour sessions = 6 training hrs.

It is mandatory for one foster parent in each family to attend Educational Advocacy Training in order to be re-licensed. Educational Advocacy Training is offered following each Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE training and many additional times. This six-hour course covers information foster parents need to know so that they can advocate for their foster children's educational rights and needs.

College of DuPage Area
630-942-2903

GLEN ELLYN
June 10 (Sat)

College of DuPage
9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

LAKE VILLA
June 17 (Sat)

Methodist Church
9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

ROMEOVILLE
June 3 (Sat)

Comfort Inn
9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Rock Valley Area
815-921-2010

ROCKFORD
June 24 (Sat)

RVC Stenstrom Center
9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Virtual Training

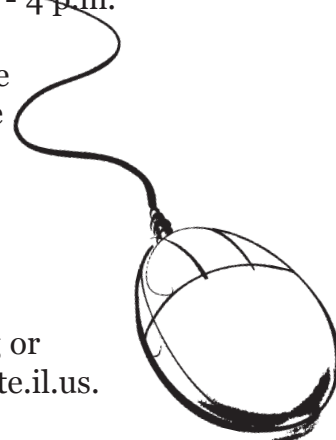
The DCFS Office of Training has blended technology with training in offering the new Virtual Training Center. The first on-line training for foster parents is called "Child and Family Team Meetings for Caregivers. Foster parents can earn three hours of training credits as they learn how a Child and Family Team Meeting (CFTM) helps the family and what the Caregiver's role is in the meeting.

Foster Parents can take this course using a computer in their home or coming to a DCFS facility, according to the schedule below:

- Thursday, June 1 from 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.
- Monday, June 5 from 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.
- Also on-site at DCFS Computer Lab - 6201 S. Emerald, Chgo
- Monday, June 5 from 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
- Saturday, June 24 from 8:45 a.m. - 12 p.m.
- Tuesday, July 11 from 6:15 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.
- Thursday, July 27 from 12:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.

To register for the foster parent online training, caregivers may contact the DCFS registration unit at 877-800-3393.

To obtain more information about the new on-line foster parent training schedule go to www.DCFStraining.org or email Jean Maher at jmaher@idcfs.state.il.us.



Northern News

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Anyone can call the regional reporter with foster parent association news and schedules; local training notices; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and ideas for news articles or supportive services that would be helpful for caregivers to know.